

## [Early Reminiscences]

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Beliefs and Customs - Life histories

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Title Early reminiscences. — 11 pages with one shot...

Place of origin Portland. Oregon Date 3/13/39

Project worker Sara B. Wrenn

Project editor

Remarks

Form A

Federal Writers' Project

Circumstances of Interview

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date March 13, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building. Portland, Oregon

Subject Early reminiscences - 11 geese with one shot - One fish-hook and what it caught -  
Petrified Woman - Haunted Lake

Name and address of informant A. J. Howell 2nd and C Sts., Oswego. Oregon

Date and time of interview March 10, 1939, 9:00-11:30

Place of interview Home of informant's son-in-law

Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant

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Mr. Robbins, bus-driver (grand-son-in-law of informant) address unknown

Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you —

Description of room, houses surroundings, etc.

Comfortably, but plainly furnished living-room of two-story house, built some 20 or more years ago, and standing on a corner lot of the village of Oswego; in a section where the streets remain ungraded, unpaved and without sidewalks. Oswego is one of the oldest villages in Oregon, and bears much of [folklore atmosphere?] with its numerous little old-fashioned houses, its shade-trees and its unimproved streets more like grassy lanes. ?

Form B

Federal Writers' Project

Personal History of Informant

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date March 13, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Early reminiscences - 11 geese with one shot - One fish-hook and what it caught -  
Haunted Lake

Name and address of informant A.J. Howell 2nd and C Sts. Oswego, Oregon

Information obtained should supply the following facts:

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1. Ancestry
  2. Place and date of birth
  3. Family
  4. Places lived in, with dates
  5. Education, with dates
  6. Occupations and accomplishments with dates
  7. Special skills and interests
  8. Community and religious activities
  9. Description of informant
  10. Other points gained in interview
- 
1. Father, Levi Howell Welsh; Mother, Mary Jones Howell Scotch-Irish
  2. Kentucky, near Bolling Green, Jan 15, 1851.
  3. Wife deceased. One daughter, Mrs. Minnie Clinefelter.
  4. Kentucky, 1851-1856; Illinois, 1856-1872; Oregon since 1872.
  5. District schools — “and not many of them”.
  6. Carpentry and bridge building. Bridge foreman for Southern Pacific for 15 years. Street commissioner for [Makinville?] 8 years. Foreman at shipyards during World War.

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7. Carpenter. "Interested in 'most everything, 'specially petrified woods. An' I like to dance today just as much as I ever did."

8. Member Odd Fellows Lodge. No church affiliations.

9. Close to six feet tall, with blue eyes, large nose, and bald head. Looks to be about seventy. Neatly dressed, active, and keenly alive to humor.

10. A remarkable old man both physically and mentally, to whom life appears to have grown anything but stale.

Form C

Federal Writers' Project

Text of Interview (Unedited)

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B, Wrenn Date March 13, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland. Oregon

Subject Early reminiscences - 11 geese with one shot - One fish-hook and what it caught -  
Haunted Lake - Petrified woman

Name and address of informant A.J. Howell 2nd and C Sts., Oswego, Oregon

Text:

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There was high water when I landed in Portland in 1872. I'd come up from Frisco by steamer. Took me 15 days to come from Illinoy — an' I didn't come by covered wagon, neither. I went to work right away out in Yamhill County, at carpenter work.

Now, derned if I can think of anything to tell yuh. Did I go to dances? 'Course I went to dances. Huh! I still go to dances, whinever I get the chanct. If you'll come down to the dance here Saturday night, I'll dance with yuh. No, I wont neither. I have to jedge the old-time waltzing, an' that shuts me out from dancin'. 'Course most of our dances used to be square dancin'. I ust to call 'em, too. Let's see, here's one. There'd be three forms, I guess you'd call 'em, to a set. A set was usually four couples, one couple to a side. Here's the first call:

1. First couple to the right; Four hands half around; Right an' left through; On to the next; Two ladies change; recharge home; On to the next; Do se do balinet' Break by the right Partner by the left; Swing to your place and balance all And partners swing.

(Repeat four times)

2

First couple to the right; Right an' left through, Right an' left six; Back again; On to the next; Four hands half around; Right an' left through; On to the next; Four hands half around; Right an' left through; On to the next; Four hands half around; Right an' left four; Right an' left six; Alaman left; Right hand to pardner an' Grand right an' left

(Repeated four times)

3. Ladies to th' right An' swing! On to the nex' An swing! On to the nex' And swing! On to the nex' An' swing! Alaman left; Grand right an' left Gents to the right - Swing! On to the nex' (Four times)

All promenade to seats.

Scraps? Why scraps was a part of the dances. Never had one without. They wasn't supposed to have whiskey, but they did. Fellers get on the side, an' one'd say: "Go back ther to the third row o' apple trees, an' then keep on goin' about ten feet, an' look 'round that stump an' see what you find." Or mebbe it' be some'eres else. Lots o' times I've seen 'em comin' in — the fellers I mean, girls didn't drink them days — rubbin' the flour off their arms from gettin' down into the flour bin after a bottle. But ther' was one thing we had in them early days the boys an' girls don't have now. Then, lots o' times, a feller's girl rode behind him when he tuk her places, an' it was right nice ridin' along on a good horse, with your girl behind you an' her arms aroun' your waist. No neckin' like now, jus' nice an' comfor'able.

### 3

I mind me of a huntin' trip the first year I was here. There was four of us went up to the headquarters the Nehalem River, clost to where Vernonia now is. Ther was an ol' hunter with us that was quite a joker. I was new o' course, an' he sez to me, he sez: "Take yer gun an' go up that mountain an' see what you find." Well I took my gun, an' I went 'bout quarter a mile from camp, an' up on the hillside I see a calf, jes' a common ol' calf. So I tho't he's makin' fun o' me, an' it made me kinda mad. An' I turn 'round an' went back to camp, an' he sez: "What'd ja see?" An' I sez, "Didn't see nothin' but a farmer's calf." An' he jumped up quick, an' sez, "That's the calf I'm s'posed to look after, "An' out he run. An' perty soon I heard a shot, an' it made me disgusted, him killin' a calf like that. An' perty soon after that I heard him yellin' to bring the pony, an' one o' the other fellers took the pony, an' perty soon they come back, bringin' a young elk. An' that's where they had the laugh on me. Bein' a greenhorn, that young elk looked jest like a half-grown dark jersey calf to me.

When I firs' come here there was a narrow guage railroad that run to McMinnville, an' it was a perty crooked right-of-way, an' perty rough. The train didn't go very fast, an' many's the time I remember when the conductor would tell hunters that was travellin' out that way,

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that if they wanted to get off the train an' go through the field, they could an' he'd meet 'em further up the line. Many's the time I heard him tell that.

An' that reminds me of once when I went after wild geese. Out 'round McMinnville the wild geese was thick then. I heard a big flock of 'em honking one night. It was in the evenin' an' they sounded like they had lighted. I didn't have no gun, but I borrowed a single-barrelled shotgun from my father-in-law an' next morning I started out for my geese.

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I went where I thought I heard 'em, but nary a goose. Then, perty soon I heard 'em. They was 'bout a quarter of a mile away. I made up my mind I was goin' have goose or know why. So, so's they wouldn't see me I crawled nearly the whole way. Perty soon I came to an ol' snake fence row — that's a rail fence all growed up with weeds an' grass; an' I peeked through, an' sure enough, close by, was my geese — a lot of 'em. I put my gun on the old rail fence, took a good sight, an' pulled the trigger. The trigger snapped, an' that was all! The gun didn't go off, but the geese heard the snap, an' up they went! I was perty mad. Ther' was a lot o' feathers droppin' an' I pulled the trigger again, an' this time she worked. I climbed over the fence an' went after my goose, an' I picked up eleven! Yep, that's what I got, 'leven geese with one shot. "Believe it or not," as Ripley sez.

If you think that's wonderful, here's a real story. (I ought to b'long to the Liars' Club, huh!) This happen'd out at Meadow Lake, west o' Carlton, in Yamhill County. Ol' Yamhill, the Yamhillers al'ays call it, an, I guess they're right. Enyway this day I was goin' fishin'. I wore my ol' fishin' clothes, an, my ol' fashioned, wide-leg gum-boots. I was goin' along, an' the fish was jumpin' good I see, and perty soon I cast my line, an' right away I caught a fish. Nice big fish it was, too. I pulled in my line an' flung it over my shoulder, an' the fish came off the hook an' landed in the fern back o' me. Well I'll be derved if that fish didn't land right in the nest of a grouse, an' the minnit the hook an' bait let go from the fish the ol' grouse hen grabbed it! 'Course then that ol' grouse hen started to fly, an' she hit me square in the back an' knocked me in the water. That ol' grouse hen was caught good an' plenty on my



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hook, an' I hung on tight to my fish pole. By and by, when the line give out, I floundered out to wher the grouse was in some rushes, an' I got the grouse and brung her in. An' then I pulled off my 5 boots to get the water out. An' when I emptied the water out, derned if I didn't empty out 13 fish thet had got caught in my boots goin' after thet grouse. Yep, I al'ays thought that a perty lucky fishin' trip, when you figger thet with one cast an' one bait I got 14 fish, (countin' the first one), one grouse hen an' the nine grouse eggs that was in the nest.

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Out on the summit o' the Coast Range mountains, between McMinnville and Tillamook, ther' was a lake that in 1874 they used to call Skookum Lake. I think it has another name now. Enyway it was Skookum Lake then, an' everybody said it was haunted. The Indians was scared to death to go near the place. They jest wouldn't go near it, that's all; an' same o' the Whites was jest as bad. They sed ther' was the most terribl' noises came from ther you ever heard, jest like this, same of them was, "Oo-oo- uh! The first all drawn out like, an' the last, the "uh" quick an' sharp, "Oo-oo- uh! — like you'd ben kicked in the middle. Then ther was other sounds, kind o' awful screechin's. Well, a young feller an' I, we decided we'd go an' find out what all these noises was. It was in the Spring, a nice, bright, warm day, an' we took a light camp outfit, an' off we went to the mountains. It was still light when we got to the lake, an' we set up camp, but not very close to the water. All the time we kep' perty still, jest as still as we could. It was terribl' still an' quiet all about — kind o' solemn like. An' then, all at once, we heard it. "O-o, o-o, uh! " "O-o, o-o, uh! " It kep' up, thet noise did, till dusk, an' we couldn't see a thing. We was gettin' kind o' nervous ourselves, but ther wasn't anything to do but stay out the night. We'd' killed an elk that afternoon, an' we had a good supper of elk steak, an' jest as we was eatin'ther' came the most dang-dingest crash; jest like a car-load o' lumber fallin' down a mountain-side. By this time we was both about ready to pull up stakes, but we decided to stick it out, an' then we heard the most awfulest screech, endin' in 6 a long wailin' sound, jest like a woman screamin, an' it wasn't once, it come over an' over again. I tell you ther wasn't

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much sleepin' we did thet night, an' we was up at daybreak. While we was eatin' breakfast that first sound come again, " O-o-uh! " " Oo-uh! " We hadn't heard that noise all night — not since dark. We decided it came from the water all right. We hurried to the edge of the lake. Jus' as we got there, we heard it again. An' then saw somethin' — an object. We saw somethin' go down, an' we heard that sound, an' then somethin' went up. All jest like a flash. An' then we saw what 'twas. What do yuh suppose? It was fish-hawks catchin' muskrats. The muskrats was thick in that lake, an' the fish-hawks was livin' high, an' ev'ry time they swooped down to the water for a rat they'd give thet funny cry, as they hit the water. Well, we felt perty brave then, so the next thing was to find out about what the crashin' was. We knew it didn't come from the lake, but 'twas some place near, in the forest somewheres. We tramped all 'round, lookin', an' at last we found it. A great big ol' dead tree, where the bark had come loose, an' we jest happened to be ther, when that bark decided to slide down, an' there it was, all piled up about that big ol' tree. Mebbe you guessed what that awful screechin' was we heard. No? Well, you see, that elk we killed — we only took the steaks, an' there was that nice fat carcass, hangin on the tree where we left it, an' there isn't anything a catamount likes better'n a nice, fat, young elk, an' so he was givin' us a serenade about it.

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Yep, I've had a lot o' fun in my life, an' I still have. If I'd had any sense I might a' been rich, but then mebbe I'd a' been poor again by this time. When I first landed in Portland I had a letter o' introduction to a young feller if I could find him. He was in Portland, an' I found him, an' we went to lunch, an' he asked me if I didn't want to buy a couple o' lots. We went 7 out to see 'em, an' they was all covered with hazelbrush an' young trees an' stumps. An' I sed no, I didn't want 'em. Them lots was where Third and Yamhill is now. (?)

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### The Petrified Woman

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(This story was told the informant by Mr. C. L. Clinefelter, son-in-law of Mr. Howell, who asked that it be included with the foregoing, Mr. Clinefelter is a man of sixty years or more.)

This happened in the days of Chinese contract labor, when Chinese coolies did most of the grubbing toward clearing the land, as well as the grading of the railroad beds. When the survey was run for the old narrow guage down here, it was found that the survey run right through an old burial place. There was two graves there, the grave of Mrs. Confer, whose husband filed on the land originally, and the grave of their hired man. I don't remember his name. Well, of course it was necessary to remove the bodies. We took up that of the hired man first. For some reason, I don't recall just why, the boxes was left in the ground. When we came to Mrs. Confer's body we had trouble. We just couldn't lift it. Somebody said mebbe the coffin was full of water, so we bored holes in it, and sure enough there was some water. We let it run out, but still we couldn't lift the coffin, so we sent for help. it took six men to lift that coffin on the two trestles, so somebody thought we ought to open the coffin and we did. We found the body was entirely petrified, all except where the tip of the nose was gone, and the ends of the great toes. Seems like the water about there, and all around here for that matter, has a lot of mineral in it, and as high as the water went in the coffin the body petrified. Not only that, but the lines of the shroud was petrified, and the gold pin at her neck was embedded in the petrified body. We estimated 8 the body weighed 600 pounds. Funny the man's body wasn't petrified, but it wasn't. I aint a scientist, so I don't know why.

Well, speakin' about the Chinese — they worked under a white overseer, with Chinese bosses under him — when those Chinese coolies came along there grading, they struck those boxes we had left in the ground, and right away they knew what they was, and such a jabbering you never heard. They jabbered and jabbered amongst themselves an' to their Chinese boss. He told the white boss they wouldn't go on with the work. They jabbered some more and then they threw down their shovels and walked off. All their gods would

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be mad if they interfered with a grave. It took a long time to convince them the bodies had been moved elsewhere, an' even then they wouldn't touch them boxes. The Whites had to put the boxes out of the way, an' that White boss was pretty hardboiled, too.

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Form D

Extra Comment

Federal Writers' Project

Works Progress Administration

OREGON FOLKLORE STUDIES

Name of worker Sara B. Wrenn Date March 13, 1939

Address 505 Elks Building, Portland, Oregon

Subject Early reminiscences - 11 geese with one shot - One fish-hook and what it caught - petrified woman - Haunted Lake

Name and address of informant A.J. Howell 2nd and C Sts., Oswego. Oregon

Comment: The informant is an extraordinary old man. Of his bald head he laughed and said, "Anyway, nobody ken say enything about my white hair." He keeps young with hobbies, chief of which is his interest in agates and petrified woods of all descriptions, which, together with his grandson, he gathers, and his grandson polishes. They have a small shop at Oswego. Another of Mr. Eowell's hobbies — besides dancing — is canes, which he makes, inlaid and otherwise, out of various woods. He brought some twenty-five

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of these canes down from his room to show the interviewer. Probably when he thinks the subject over he will recall more tall tales to relate.